

It Makes No Sense

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[0 : 0 0] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And we just want to say thank you for tuning in to this radio broadcast. Our heart here at FCC is to simply present the Word of God in context and let God do His thing.

Let God transform our hearts more and more into the image of Christ so that we can live for Him and love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

We're so glad that you've joined us today. Now, let me ask you this question. Have you ever noticed that you can often place someone in a certain family by their walk? For instance, my brother DJ and his family go to church here.

And if you didn't know that we were brothers and I asked you to look around this church and find my brother, you may choose 30 or 40 other people in the church before you get to my actual brother. It's just a reality. See, he got all the ugly genes and I got all the good-looking ones. Or maybe it's the other way around. But just the other day, we went out as a staff here at the church for lunch in the church bus.

[1 : 0 4] And when we were done, I asked bus driver and Pastor Steve to drop me off at my brother's auto repair shop to get my vehicle. Well, my brother just happened to be outside. He was working on something else when we pulled in.

And in the words of Amy, our administrative assistant, when she saw us walking back into the shop together, our walk was exactly the same, as pigeon-toed as we are, and she could tell that we were brothers in that moment.

Now, that reminds me of a story from years ago about a father and a son in a small western town who were on the search for an uncle that they'd never seen or met before.

As they're scanning all the people they see, suddenly the dad, pointing across the square to a man who was walking away from him, said, hey, there goes my uncle.

And the son, with this very confused look on his face, said, well, how do you know? We've never seen him before and you can't even see his face. And that's when the dad said, son, I know him because he walks exactly like my father.

[2 : 0 8] See, isn't that the aim, the goal of this series we've been walking through here in the Gospel of Mark for 10 weeks now? To walk in such a way that people know we belong to our Heavenly Father and by the fruit of our lives, they are drawn into a saving relationship with Jesus.

Now, like we often say here, this faith walk is a marathon and not a sprint. It's a daily walk of growing more and more into the image of Christ and that's one step at a time.

And so let's just be real. There are going to be days where you mess up, where life happens, and you get knocked three steps backward. But the ultimate goal, as the days and months and years march by way too fast, is that we're getting back up, we're letting God dust us back off, and we're growing closer to Christ one step and one day at a time as we walk in the Holy Spirit and pursue the heart of Christ.

Now, if you'd grab your Bible for me and turn or click to Mark chapter 14. Mark 14, last Sunday we talked about when Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

We saw this fake worship, what we called mock worship, from most in the crowd. As honestly, they were trying to conform Jesus into their own selfish agendas.

[3 : 3 0] We began that march toward Easter as we finally made our way into the last week of Jesus' life. And while we could take six months, guys, and we could just kind of hunker down here in the events of this final week, remember, the purpose of this series is to allow the Holy Spirit to open up God's Word as we look at what a disciple of Jesus really looks like in a world that is so quick to water down or try to change what it means to be a Christ follower.

And what I love about this FCC family is that we are so full of people who desire above everything else to be real and to 100% be biblical as we strive to live for the God who set us free by his grace. So let me paint the picture of where we're at in this timeline of Holy Week here in Mark 14. So if the Sunday before Easter is traditionally where we place the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, then on Monday, Jesus would have driven out those who were getting rich off of temple sacrifices as he made it clear that God's house would not be a den of robbers, but instead a house of prayer. Then, on Tuesday, we see the religious leaders coming pretty strong at Jesus, and yet they can't stand against his wisdom. We have what's been called Jesus' last sermon. He even praises the poor widow whose offering may have been small compared to others, but it was so much more filled with faith as she gave everything she had in worship. [5 : 08] And we're going to talk a little more about that today. But Jesus even spoke about the future of his kingdom, including his death on a cross that Tuesday that was going to happen about three days later.

And now we come to our story that, like I said, is sandwiched into the events of Tuesday. But based on the timeline that Mark gives us, he's basically doing a little flashback to a story that had happened about three or four days before when they were in the town of Bethany that honestly, in a lot of ways, this story makes no sense to the world. And yet we know that God's right-side-up kingdom is what we've been called to as disciples of Jesus who radically reject the world system and ways of doing things. So let's start here in Mark 14. You should be there with me by now. And we're going to look at verse 1 where God's word says this.

Now the Passover and the festival of unleavened bread were only two days away. Now let me stop there for just a second and explain what the Passover and festival of unleavened bread were. [6 : 16] So these can often be used interchangeably because they will flow one from another. But let me explain them in each one and what they were exactly. The Passover, you remember the story about how God told Pharaoh in Egypt through Moses, let my people go because they were under Egyptian bondage.

But Pharaoh was hard-hearted. He wouldn't let him go. And so God began to send one plague after another to let him, after each one, have a chance to let him go. But still he was stubborn and wouldn't let him go.

The final plague that did the trick was God was going to send his angel, his angel of death over each house and the firstborn would die.

And so what he told the Israelites was, hey, you've got to take the blood of a lamb and put it over your doorpost and the lentils of your homes. And that will be a sign that the death angel will pass over and no one will die in that home.

And it happened. And then we see the festival of unleavened bread, which is when they had unleavened bread, they quickly made it so they could take it with them as they left Egypt and started on their journey towards the promised land.

[7 : 29] It says that the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. But not during the festival, they said, or the people may riot.

So in a world where people often think that we're in control of everything that happens, in a world where powerful politicians and the wealthy and influential are often working behind the scenes, pulling strings to guarantee a certain outcome, in that kind of world, we have a sovereign God whose purposes and timing will never be overturned.

We have a God whose ways, as Scripture tells us, are higher than our ways. So I want you to fill this in. If you want to go to the YouVersion Bible app, down in the bottom right-hand corner of the home screen is the three lines that represent a menu.

And you can go ahead and fill this in on your outline. You can go to events. You can go to First Christian Church of Greensburg. That will take you to our outline. But fill this first one in.

A disciple knows that God's plans cannot be thwarted. A disciple of Jesus Christ knows that God's plans can never be stopped. See, these religious leaders didn't want to put Jesus to death on what we know is Good Friday.

[8 : 45] They wanted to get past these important Jewish holidays with all these extra people that were in the city. They didn't want to incite a riot. They knew that if a riot ensued, then the Romans, who had taken over the Jews who occupied this land, they would bring military force.

And they, as religious leaders, if that happened, would lose their privileged position of authority. But here's what I love. These religious leaders had no control over the timing because the God of the universe already had a supernatural, ordained, controlled timetable.

Now let me show you this in Daniel 9, verses 25 and 26. And I'm going to read this from a translation that I just used from time to time because it just makes it a little easier to understand. The New Living Translation. It says this, Daniel 9. Now listen and understand. Seven sets of seven plus 62 sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler, the anointed one, comes.

Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses despite the perilous times. After this, listen to this, a period of 62 sets of seven, the anointed one will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing.

[10:07] Now, I'm going to stop right there in our verse because this is what I want you to see. A lot of smart people have done the math from this passage looking at the history of Israel.

And here's what's amazing about our God whose plans can never be stopped. In the words of John MacArthur, on that specific Passover, in the very year that the prophet Daniel had predicted, on the same day, at the same time when Passover lambs were being killed in the temple, the Father had purposed that the spotless Lamb of God would be slain.

And even though, guys, these conniving religious leaders wanted to wait for their own comfort sake, God's timing was perfect. And Jesus was killed for our sins on the very day that Daniel had predicted hundreds and hundreds of years earlier as Jesus became that ultimate sacrificial Passover Lamb to take away the sins of the world.

So, what does that mean for you and me right now in 2023? Well, it means as a disciple of Jesus, I can trust that my God is in control, that his timing and his purposes over creation, even over my life, they are perfect whether I understand it or not.

I don't have to grab for control. I don't have to force things around me to happen. He has me and he has you under control. So, when you find yourself struggling at work and ready just to walk out without a plan, stop and pray and let God take the lead.

[11:43] His timing is perfect. When you have a child walking without Jesus or maybe living a lifestyle that goes against the truth that God's Word clearly teaches, pray and trust God's leading.

Or when you're feeling a little lonely and you're tempted to force a relationship that's not from God, not equally yoked, you step back and you do it God's way and you trust his perfect timing.

Now, I may have shared this with you before, but you know, that's what preachers do, right? We repeat the same stories and you're supposed to act surprised each time. But I remember going to Bible college and I mean, I would have been like, what, 18, 19 years old.

And it was almost like everyone coupled up, all these young guys and girls, they coupled up in the first two weeks of the semester. And then before you knew it, couples are engaged, they're married by the end of the freshman year or the sophomore year.

And here I am over here at the time, you know, playing basketball for four years there in shape with a hairline that's not receded at all. And I'm probably way too picky.

[12:49] I mean, I just wasn't impressed with the crop, if you know what I'm saying, okay? And although I dated a few times through college, I actually graduated single, which was almost unheard of at Bible college.

And I remember thinking, man, I'm a loser. God, is there something wrong with me? Well, right after that, I started my internship here at FCC. We're talking 2006.

And I remember being on the hunt. If there was a Christian girl and she was attractive, I was over here saying, thank you, God. It must be a sign, right? And after trying to force several relationships that were just not from God, I finally came to a point, and this wasn't a stage try to trick God kind of thing.

I mean, I was sincere. I finally said, God, I'm sorry. I've been an idiot. I've been trying to take this out of your hands. I'm going to pursue your heart, Lord.

And when your timing is right, I'm going to try to be that man that a godly woman would desire. I'm going to seek you and try to make sure my life is in you completely.

[13:55] And guess what? It was probably less than a month, maybe two later, that dear friends of ours set me up with Bethany, and the rest is history.

And listen, that's why I hired him as our youth pastor here at FCC, because he has the ultimate one-upper on me, and I'm trying to get a little bit back. No, I'm just kidding. He's just really talented as a youth pastor.

But it was amazing what happened when I stopped grabbing for control. See, it makes no sense to the world. But to a disciple of Jesus, we know that God's plans cannot be thwarted.

And I'll tell you what, when you know you're a child of a king like that, when you know that your God has the victory in the end, and you're on his team, when you know his perfect will and his purposes are for your good, it changes everything about how you and I approach things like conflict, or tragedy, or frustrations, or relationships, or just everyday life.

And then here's the second thing I want you to see. A disciple eats with sinners. Now, I'm going to be quick with this one because it's such a small detail in the larger story being told here.

[15:08] But look at me here at the first part of Mark 14, verse 3, where God's Word says this. It says, Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany. That was about two miles, I believe, east of Jerusalem.

He was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. So here's a guy who had maybe the worst disease that you could get in those days, a disease that was incurable. It made you unclean religiously, which means you could not go to the temple. You had to stay away from people. You had to leave your family behind for the rest of your life and go live in this leper colony with other misfits.

At least that's how you would have felt. And meanwhile, you would have suffered greatly as your body deteriorated from the inside out. And I'm not even exaggerating here.

Limbs and things would literally fall off. That's how awful this disease was. And you still see it in some third world countries today. And at some point, Jesus had healed this man because you could not be cured from this disease.

[16:13] There was no treatment to help you with this. And we know there are several stories in the Gospels of Jesus healing lepers. Now, you may look at your outline here and say, what? A disciple eats with sinners?

This guy was sick. That wasn't a sin thing. But let me tell you a story and you'll see why I worded it that way. Probably 10 or 11 years ago, my mentor who's now in glory with Jesus, he and I went to a Bob Russell conference in Converse, Indiana at a church camp.

And at one point, I spotted this guy. And to be honest with you, he looks so differently than me. I'm Opie Taylor over here, you know, with my red hair and nice clean cut look.

And he was a pretty good size guy. I'm guessing he was like a Samoan guy. That's what he looked like. He had big curly black hair. But it was his shirt that caught my attention more than anything. Black shirt, white letters, all lowercase. And it simply said, eats with sinners. And I thought that's really cool. See, he learned that from Jesus who was notorious for locating the down and out, the despised, the prostitutes, the promiscuous, the lowest of society, probably the drunkards, the guy with leprosy that was looked at like, hey, just don't get close to me.

[17:31] There's something wrong with you. And Jesus had a way of meeting them in their sin, which by the way, we're all sinners. And he transformed lives. And he used even a ragtag group of disciples that nobody else would have chose to turn this world right side up for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I love that our Savior ate with sinners, the down and out. He loved every person and considered every person valuable because they were made in the image of God.

And so as Jesus was eating at Simon's home, a man who formerly had leprosy that only goes away if Jesus heals you, a man many others would probably still stay away from, like, are you sure that guy's cured?

We see God's heart to seek and save the lost and the hurting and to use broken people to build his kingdom. See, a disciple has the same heart as Jesus and sees the value in every person, no matter what label society has put on them.

And that makes no sense to a world that is often scratching and clawing their way to the top. And I'm gonna be better in so-and-so and I'm gonna prove that my worth is better than them.

[18:42] And yet, what did the God of the universe do? He actually was very bold with those who thought they were the elite. And he ate with guys like tax collectors and guys with leprosy.

He loved them. He ate with sinners. And that's what we're called to do as disciples of Jesus, to love anybody God puts in our path, no matter what walk of life they come from.

And then third, a disciple brings a sacrifice of worship. A sacrifice of worship. And this is where I wanna spend the bulk, the rest of our time, looking at a story that didn't even make sense to the disciples who had walked with Jesus for years now.

So turn back to Mark 14 with me. And let's pick up here in verse three. And let's look at this story. While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume made of pure nard.

That means there was no dilution to it. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another. So very strong rebuke.

[20 : 00] Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money could have been given to the poor. And they rebuked her harshly. Leave her alone, said Jesus.

Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you and you can help them anytime you want. But you'll not always have me. She did what she could.

She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.

So her example of worship and sacrifice will be told. And listen, we're reading that story right now.

So this is true. So even though Mark doesn't tell us who this is, the gospel of John does.

It was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Jesus was very close with this family. Mary had watched Jesus meet her in her grief as her brother Lazarus had been dead for days.

[21 : 00] And what does Jesus do? He brings him back out of the grave clothes and brings him back from the dead. He's alive again. And she saw all this. Mary's the one who Jesus commended for sitting at his feet and learning from him when Martha was griping about her sister who wouldn't help and so busy to get her to-do list done.

And I'll tell you, this one's hard for me because I'm such a Martha in so many ways. And now she recognizes Jesus, his coming death, when the disciples seem clueless to all these plain warnings that he continues to give.

And she comes, and she sacrifices, and she anoints his body for the coming burial. Now here's the question. What's so amazing about her sacrifice of breaking this bottle of perfume and pointing on Jesus to anoint his body?

See, we know perfume is still not cheap in our world today, right? I mean, anytime you have to buy new cologne or perfume, it's expensive. It's not fun. And it's so much more available today and inexpensive than it was in the first century when it was extremely rare.

See, this perfume would have come from northern India. And since Amazon wasn't on the scene yet, it would have come at a great expense to bring it such a long way in ancient days.

[22 : 18] John even tells us it was a Roman pound, which to us means it was about 12 fluid ounces. And then we see in the Gospel of John just a little more detail that opens up this passage to us here.

In John 12, starting in verse 4, it says, But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who would later betray him, objected. Why wasn't this perfume if I could talk, perfume sold and the money given to the poor?

It was worth a year's wages. He did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. As a keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

So the perfume in those days would have cost a year's wages for an average worker. So I went to Google and I found several articles, all were credible, that basically said within \$1,000 or \$2,000, pretty much the same thing, that the average salary in the United States in 2022 was probably somewhere between \$52,000 and \$54,000 annually.

That's average. You got low, you got high, all of it comes together at about \$54,000. So if this story were to take place today, she was willing, because of her loyalty, because of her devotion to Christ, to give up around, I don't know, \$40,000, \$50,000, \$55,000 of wages to worship her Savior.

[23 : 44] Sometimes we're not even willing to give up sleep or other activities or sports or whatever. And she gives up probably her greatest material possession that most people would have probably never been able to acquire.

And with her actions, she worships Jesus because she was so thankful for his amazing grace over her life. She pours out a year's worth of wages.

And it was the disciples who loved Jesus who were being led by the betrayer, Judas Iscariot, that were over here griping about the waste of money spent in worship to Jesus, even though it wasn't their money at all.

So this begs the question, do we as people who love Jesus get caught up in the same kind of me-centered worship where it's all about my preferences and my comfort?

Where worshiping Jesus, if I'm honest sometimes, is more about me than it is about him? And yet Mary is a great example to us as Christians when our hearts start to go there because all of us, sometimes it does.

[24 : 50] And Mary came and she sacrificed something so precious to say, Jesus, I give you everything I am and you come first before anyone or anything else.

Wow. That's the heart that I want. So let me share one of my favorite stories with you. A sweet little girl with blonde hair was getting ready to turn five.

Waiting with her mother at the checkout line, she saw them. A circle of glistening white pearls in a pink foil box. Oh please, mommy, please, can I have them?

Mommy, please, please, please. Well quickly, the mother looked at the back of the little foil box and then looked back into the pleading blue eyes of her little girl's face.

Nine dollars and 95 cents. That's almost ten dollars, honey. If you really want them, we can come back. I think you can do some extra chores and mommy and daddy can give you a little bit more money and remember, your birthday is only a week away and you may get some birthday money.

[25 : 51] Well as soon as Jenny got home, she emptied her piggy bank. After dinner, she did more than her share of chores. She even went over to the neighbor and asked Mrs. McJames if she could pick up sticks in her yard for a couple of dollars.

On her birthday, grandma gave her some birthday money and at last, she had enough money to buy the necklace. Jenny loved her pearls.

They made her feel dressed up and grown up. She wore them everywhere she went to church, to kindergarten, even to bed. She never took them off unless she was getting into the bubble bath because her mom told her if they got wet, your neck's going to turn green.

Well, Jenny also had a very loving daddy and every night when she was ready for bed, he would come upstairs to read a story and pray with her. Well, one night when he finished the story, he asked her, Jenny, do you love me?

Oh yes, daddy, you know that I love you. Then give me your pearls. Oh daddy, not my pearls, but you can have princess, the white horse from my collection, the one with the pink tail.

[26 : 55] Remember daddy, the one you gave me? She's my favorite. That's okay, honey. Daddy loves you. Good night. And he brushed her cheek with a kiss. About a week later after story time, Jenny's daddy asked her again, do you love me?

Daddy, you know that I love you. Then give me your pearls. Oh daddy, not my pearls, but you can have my baby doll. You know, the brand new one I got for my birthday. She's so beautiful and you can have the yellow blanket that matches her sleeper too.

That's okay, honey. Sleep well. God bless you, little one. Daddy loves you. And as always, he kissed her cheek gently. A few nights later when her daddy came in, Jenny was sitting on her bed with her legs crossed Indian style.

As he came close, he noticed that her chin was shaking and tears were rolling down her cheeks. And he said, sweetie, what's the matter? Jenny didn't say anything, but she lifted her hand up to her daddy.

And when she opened it, she dropped her little pearl necklace into his hands. With a slight quiver, she finally said, here daddy, it's for you.

[28 : 00] And that's when Jenny's daddy reached out with one hand to take the cheap necklace. And with the other hand, he reached into his pocket and he pulled out a blue velvet case with a strand of genuine pearls and he gave it to her.

See, he had had them the whole time. He was just waiting for her to give up the cheap stuff so he could give her a genuine treasure.

Now, I love that story because I really think it matches the heart of our story here with Mary just pouring this extremely expensive perfume all over Jesus to anoint his body.

I think that we hang on to all this stuff of the world and we prioritize all these other things that really don't matter in the end and sometimes God gets our leftovers.

And maybe they're even keeping us, those things are keeping us from truly coming all in like Mary did to worship Jesus by bringing a sacrifice of worship.

[29 : 04] See, there's a freedom and there's a joy when we truly bring a sacrifice of worship before our Savior who is so worthy of our praise.

So I'm going to leave you and me both with this question. What cheap necklace in your life needs to be given up so that you can get the real treasure that God has for you as you make Him the Lord of your life?

A disciple brings a sacrifice of worship and in the kingdom of God that makes perfect sense. Pray with me. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your words of life today.

Thank you for how you've spoken to us. Let these words stir our hearts and make us more like you, Jesus. We pray in your name. Amen. Let me give you this quick invitation.

If you would like to ask some questions or talk about surrendering your life to Christ, you can reach out to us. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana. Ray at FCCGreensburg.com or you can call us at 812-663-8488.

[30 : 14] Hey, God bless you and have a great week.